

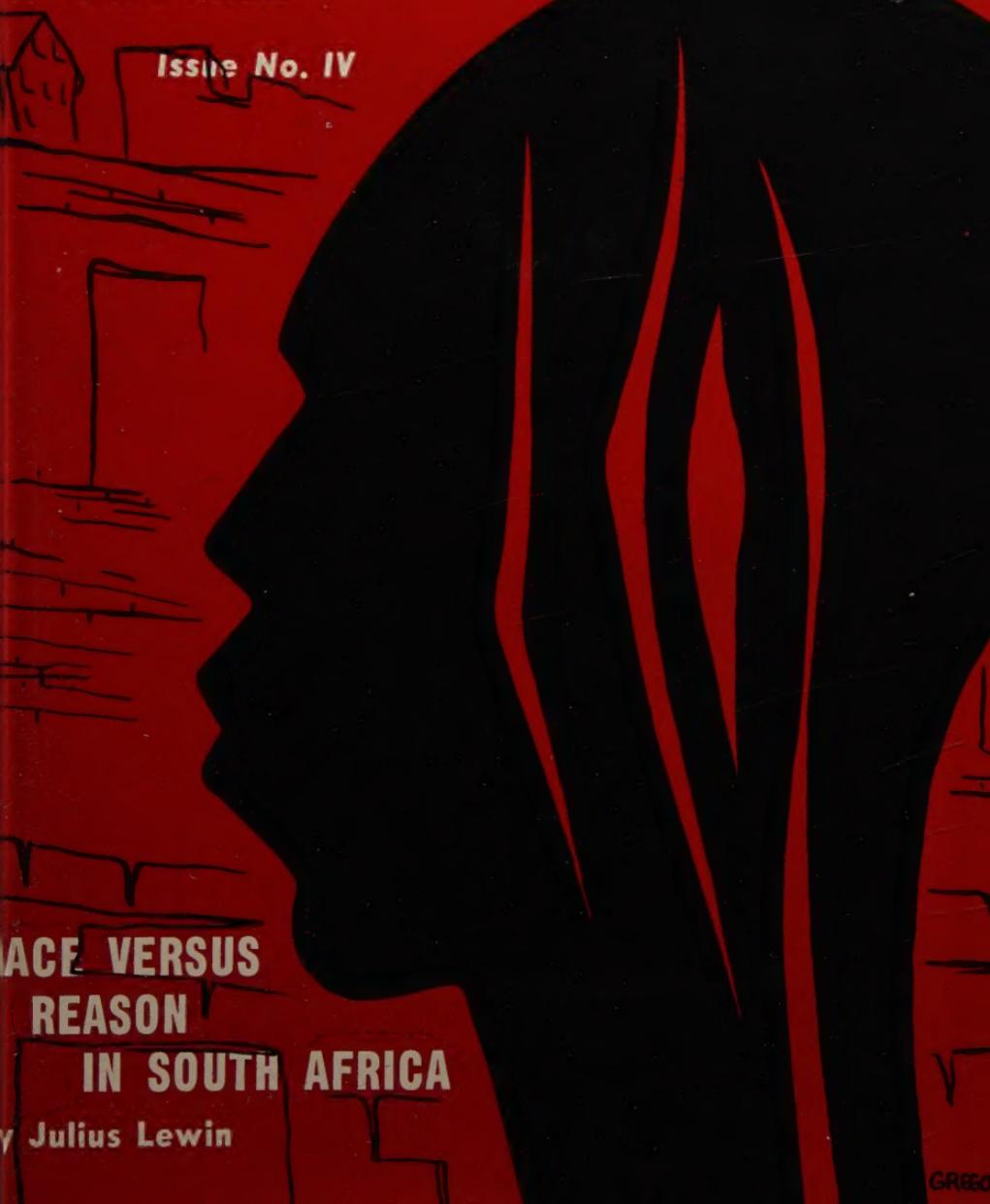
# SOCIAL ACTION

DECEMBER 15, 1950

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*visions Christians Face in the  
World Crisis:*

*Issue No. IV*



ACE VERSUS  
REASON  
IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Julius Lewin

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# SOCIAL ACTION

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DECEMBER 15, 1950

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## Tinderbox in Africa

The dark picture of deteriorating race relations and mounting tensions in South Africa reported in this issue of *Social Action* is not exaggerated. But Dr. Julius Lewin does not allow the darkness of the picture to hide the fact that there is a growing group of liberals who are greatly dissatisfied with the increasing repressions and injustices. Whether the liberals will be able to strengthen their position sufficiently to keep the rising tide of Afrikaner Nationalism from completely engulfing the country is a question affecting the whole world. With the mounting frustrations of Africans, Indians, and Colored peoples in South Africa is the increasing conviction among some that the entire white world, with the exception of the communist parts, is united against them.

The communist propaganda will appear in error to depressed peoples to the extent that American Christians take positive action to overcome conditions similar to South Africa's in our own country and to the extent that we aid the Africans by international pressure and direct missionary action. Our failure to change unjust racial conditions in our own country and our unwillingness to meet fully the missionary commitment of our forefathers to depressed peoples simply lend support to those venomous men spreading the gospel of hate throughout the world.

The tinderbox of Africa described in this issue may soon burst into flames scorching much of the world, including the United States, unless men of good will and liberals of all races have the courage, strength and wisdom to take positive action for brotherhood. This action can be greatly helped by American Christians living their convictions at home and abroad.

—JOHN A. REULING\*

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\*Mr. Reuling is Secretary for Africa in the Foreign Department of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of the Congregational Christian Churches.

# Race Versus Reason In South Africa

By Julius Lewin

## THE RECENT FEUDAL REVOLUTION

Before 1948 South Africa appeared to the world much like any other British dominion. True, none of its Prime Ministers—Botha, Smuts, Hertzog—had borne an English name, but the forms and traditions of its public life were clearly modelled on Britain's. If interracial rumblings reached the ears of the great world from time to time, they were regarded as nothing more serious than growing pains.

The general election of May 26, 1948, produced what was in effect a bloodless revolution. The Nationalist Party took office. For the first time in South African history since the Union of 1910, no English-speaking person was included in the Cabinet. Even if Dr. D. F. Malan, the new Prime Minister, had desired to provide representation for the 40 per cent of white South Africans whose mother tongue is English, he would have been hard put to find a suitable man for the purpose. He would certainly have had to look outside the ranks of his own Nationalist Party which up to that date had consisted exclusively of Afrikaners.

### *Political Domination by Afrikaners*

The political domination of South Africa by the Afrikaners is the new fact in the situation. Previously known to the world only as "Boers," *i.e.*, farmers of Dutch descent, these people, now numbering a million and a half, have come to town in a double sense. The nationalist movement, dating from 1912, grew steadily through two world wars. After the first war, the Nationalists literally began coming to town from the rural areas in which

they had grown up. They brought with them the frontier tradition that had so strongly shaped their fathers' lives. They clung to it more tenaciously than the Africans, also moving to the city in search of work, held to their tribal traditions.

Much of the religious and political faith of the Afrikaner has retained its seventeenth-century roots. Later doctrines concerned with the rights of man, or with the economic values of an urban society, have never appealed to the Afrikaner. Essentially rural if not feudal in outlook, he believes that the proper relation between white and black is that of master and servant; and he is ready to cite Scripture for his purpose.

### *Role of the Dutch Reformed Church*

The Afrikaner view of life and politics is powerfully supported by the Dutch Reformed Church. In all except the very largest towns, the *predikant* or minister occupies a position and wields an influence comparable to that of the Roman Catholic priest in Italy or Spain. The present Prime Minister, Dr. Malan, was himself trained for the church and was a *predikant* for some years before he became first an editor and then a politician.

How exactly the church wishes to apply its essentially Calvinist doctrines to modern politics, it is hard to say. The church is now in the process of working out the theoretical problems in-

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JULIUS LEWIN is a South African. Trained as a lawyer, he practiced at the bar in Cape Town and later in London before he left the law to specialize in African affairs. He lectured on colonial administration at the London School of Economics and Political Science before returning to South Africa where, since 1939, he has been senior lecturer in African studies in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. His book, *Studies in African Native Law*, was published in the United States in 1947, when he held a post in the Trusteeship Department of the United Nations. He plays an active part in the movement for better race relations.

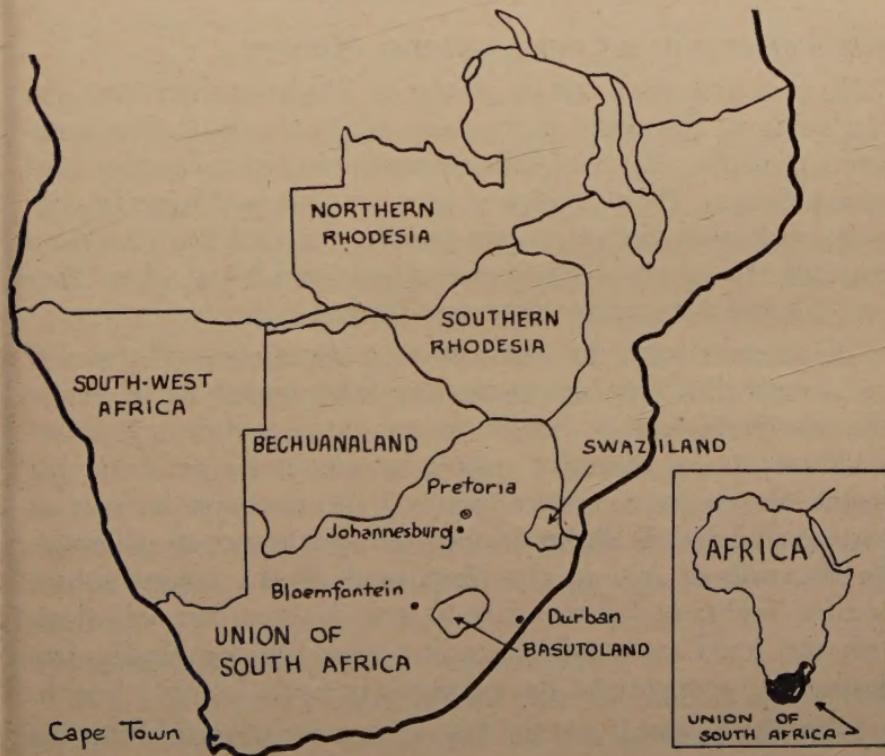
volved and it is known to be involved in great controversy on the subject. A large and representative gathering summoned by it in April, 1950, debated with the aid of the Nationalist Party's foremost experts the issue of native policy, still the central political question facing the country. What emerged was the church's sincere belief that total *apartheid* or separation of black and white was necessary, even if real sacrifices were required of white folks to enable the vision to become reality. Churchmen who take this view are, of course, aware that all white industry and agriculture are at present based on low-paid native labor, but they are ready to contemplate, at least in theory, drastic economic changes in order to make white men independent of black labor. The Prime Minister, however, was quick to repudiate in Parliament any such conception of native policy and so the gulf between the theories of the theologians and the practice of the politicians remains wide and unbridged. But this gulf does not prevent the Dutch Reformed Church from whole-heartedly supporting the Nationalists.

There is no longer any doubt about the aims of the politicians who compose the present government. In the first place they have announced their determination to deprive the African and Colored (originally half-caste) people of the meagre political rights that previous governments had left them. That this aim has not yet been accomplished is due to the special protection that the Constitution gives to these historic rights. But Dr. Malan has already made it perfectly plain that if his allies in Parliament, the small "Afrikaner party" of moderate old-style Nationalists, will allow him to do so, he is determined to override the conventions of the Constitution in order to achieve his purpose.

In this matter of political rights the Nationalists are fighting a battle against history. Ever since the old Cape Colony first obtained a democratic constitution almost a century ago, the franchise in the Cape Province (the second largest of the five states that now compose the Union of South Africa) was based not on race but on a simple test of "civilization" derived from the

possession of literacy and a little property or money. "Equal rights for all civilized men" was the slogan coined in the nineties to indicate the liberal policy pursued by Cape tradition. It offered a sharp contrast to the policy laid down by the northern Boer Republics (later to become a part of the Union) whose Constitution in the Transvaal declared that "there shall be no equality between white and black in church or state."

It is important to remember what the present generation of white South Africans is itself in danger of forgetting—that the tradition of equal political and legal rights is as old as the alternative one of explicit racial domination. It is true that the liberal tradition has seriously declined in the last twenty years, having been eroded by the persistent attacks directed against it ever since the Nationalists emerged as a political force. But it has not been eradicated.



## THE LIBERALS OF SOUTH AFRICA

The great-grandfather of liberalism in South Africa was a Congregational minister, Dr. John Philip. Next year (1951) the centenary of his death will be commemorated, and the friends as well as the enemies of liberalism will no doubt take the opportunity to reopen the ancient controversy about this remarkable man.

A product of the Evangelical movement, Philip was trained for the ministry at Hoxton in Scotland. He served his Aberdeen congregation for many years before he accepted the pressing invitation to go to South Africa to take charge of the affairs of the London Missionary Society. Shortly before, in 1819, he had been honored by Columbia University with a doctorate, presumably because at that time Nonconformists had not yet been admitted to British universities. Princeton, too, had recognized his merit by granting him a similar degree a year later.

### *Achievements of a Congregational Minister*

No bare summary can do justice to Philip's achievement in South Africa. For thirty years, from 1820 till 1850, Philip supervised all the scattered mission stations of the London Missionary Society. He also advised later arrivals in Africa. In constant touch with Boston, it was he who directed the American Board of Missions to the field of Zululand and Natal where they have labored with noble effect ever since.

"A minister with the interests of a statesman," Philip was quick to realize that no missionary who hoped to be really effective could remain indifferent to the economic and social condition of the primitive people to whom he preached the gospel. Social improvement involved the assertion at least of existing civil rights. Philip grasped the importance of maintaining the rule of law in the hinterland of the colony where frontier conditions left men free to treat as slaves not only those with the legal status of slaves, but also the technically free Hottentots, ancestors of the present-day Cape Colored people.

John Philip was, if not the first to perceive, certainly the first

to denounce the iniquity of those "pass laws" that restricted the freedom of brown men to migrate within their own country, and that to this day are still applied to black men. He asserted, too, the value of freedom of speech when he dared to criticize the Governor and he made common cause with others who demanded freedom for the infant local press.

Within ten years after he landed in Cape Town Philip had won the battle for the legal emancipation of the Hottentots. A few years later the famous group of Emancipators in London, with whom he kept in touch, celebrated the abolition of slavery itself throughout the British empire.

There is nowhere in South Africa a public monument to Dr. John Philip. But his memory is cherished by liberals conscious of their debt to him and his name has finally been vindicated against calumny in the works of major latter-day historians.

So successful were Philip's courageous efforts that when representative government was at last established in the Cape in 1854, three years after his death, the Constitution made no distinction between men on the grounds of their race or color. The Nationalists, for purposes of their own, like to attribute to the sinister political influence of Dr. John Philip and other British immigrants not only this fact but the whole of the subsequent Cape liberal tradition. This exaggerated view is indeed still embodied in the history textbooks used in all the white schools. The Nationalists realize that this earlier liberal faith in South Africa has never been lost, serious though its decline has been when measured in terms of political support. On the contrary, it has shown unmistakable signs of revival. These signs have unfortunately not been found in Parliament, where the last great liberal champion was Jan H. Hofmeyr who died in 1948. Rather they have been in the minds of a significant number of people whose views find inadequate reflection in Parliament.

### *Distortion of History by Nationalists*

It is this historical background that Dr. Malan has in mind when he denounces the liberals of the present day. His de-

nunciation requires a distortion of South African history. It is plain enough that the Nationalists are laboring to establish as a fact their belief that both in the past and at present men who are liberals are *uitlanders* or "unSouth African" in their outlook. By their definition no decent South African can possibly be a liberal. They want to make the vary phrase "South African liberal" sound like a contradiction in terms.

In this endeavor they will certainly fail. They will fail because never before in South African history has there been a harder core of real liberalism than there is today. This statement will surprise only those who have lost their sense of perspective under the pressure of current events.

### *Characteristics of Contemporary Liberals*

The contemporary South African liberals are a type different from those in 1909 when the Constitution of the Union was framed or in 1929 when the general election sealed the fate of the old nonracial franchise. In the first place they are now an indigenous product. Most of the older generation of liberals grew up in Europe, and to this fact their opponents attributed their views on color problems. Now the new generation, whatever inspiration it may derive from the worldwide climate of opinion about human rights, is consciously rooted in South African soil and, whether British, Afrikaner, or Jewish in origin, it yields to no Nationalist in the quality of its patriotism. Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* offers an indication of the emotion with which present-day South Africans think of the land of their birth and of all its races. It is significant that Paton's novel was a bestseller not only in the United States but also in South Africa.

Nor is it only emotionally that the modern liberal is sound. Intellectually he is in many respects much better equipped than his predecessors. For one thing he has a thorough understanding of the economics of race relations. If he talks less about human rights and more about human and natural resources, it is because he is enough of a realist to recognize that elections

in South Africa are lost, not won, by those who plead for political rights for colored folks. He has to explain to the electorate that bread and butter for all are more closely connected with supply and demand than with race and color.

### *Where Are the Liberals Found?*

Where are these liberals to be found? They are not in any one political party or organization. Many of them are in the four English-speaking universities, on the faculties and among the postwar students who fought on the battle front against Nazis and in defense of democracy. Many more are to be found in most of the Christian churches where men and women still hold that what is morally wrong can never be politically right—witness the wide consensus of religious opinion that has condemned the present government's policy of *apartheid* or total segregation of white from nonwhite in every sphere of activity.

Yet another body of liberals keeps alive in some of the labor unions, notably in the Cape, the old socialist ideal of the essential brotherhood of working men. And all these segments of public opinion are finding common ground with those enlightened entrepreneurs in industry and commerce who believe in a society free from racial barriers and who are ready to back their belief with financial sinews for political warfare.

### *Liberals and Communists*

Though liberals are not without faith and solid support, they are handicapped by special difficulties. Their immediate danger comes from the determined attempt to make liberalism seem synonymous with communism. This sinister strategy on the part of the Nationalists does not seem so absurd in South Africa as it might be anywhere else in the world. The Communist Party, outlawed by recent legislation, was conducted in South Africa by a type of person much superior to those who are responsible for its activities in Britain or the United States. It attracted to its ranks not only eager young people with more zeal than discretion but earnest white men from the professional classes who studied the country's needs with care and insight. Consequently

communist policy in the Union emphasized the cruelty and waste involved in Jim Crow laws and offered an alternative based on the genuine interracial fellowship of human equality.

Africans who remained indifferent to the gospel according to Marx were attracted and influenced by the militant demand for equal rights pressed by the communists. In such a situation the only white people who could conceivably compete with the communists were outspoken liberals who also believe in human equality and who also oppose racial discrimination. But today the more frankly liberals express their own beliefs, the more do the Nationalists assert that there is no real difference at all between liberals and communists.

### *Suppression of Communism Act*

Certainly both liberals and communists alike are put in jeopardy by the recent Suppression of Communism Act. This act virtually suspends the rule of law in relation to such fundamental rights as freedom of speech and assembly. Under its terms the government has completely arbitrary powers over the activities and even the livelihood of anyone whom, in its wisdom, it names a communist. Communism is very broadly defined and there is no appeal to the courts. Once a person is labelled communist, he is prohibited from holding any public office and can even be expelled from Parliament. He cannot attend public gatherings of any kind and may be banished from any part of the country. He is in fact completely at the government's mercy and if he disobeys a government order or is accused of promoting "communism," he may be tried and imprisoned for a period of anything up to ten years.

Against the passing of this harsh law, unique in the Western World, the parliamentary Opposition protested in Parliament and public opposition was voiced by the legal profession and many eminent men, including the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg. But protest from whatever quarter availed nothing and the government has now begun to apply the act.

Yet liberalism will not easily be extinguished. For one thing,

the efforts of the liberals are strengthened by the constant pressure on the government of hard economic realities. All who have studied native policy are now agreed that it cannot be considered as something apart from economic and social policy as a whole. What liberals therefore demand today is not simply an abstract bill of rights for the black man. They assert, and their assertion is supported by economists, that what the country needs most of all is an imaginative program of reconstruction that will embrace the human needs of all racial groups whatever their color.

### *A Liberal Program Available*

Such a program for progress has in fact been carefully compiled in a whole series of Reports published by the Social and Economic Planning Council set up by General Smuts to advise him during the second world war. The Council is composed of liberal-minded men and women who based their valuable Reports on a clear recognition that white and black, being deeply dependent on each other, must rise or sink together.

The main concern of the Council has been with problems of poverty. The members realize that racial discrimination is no cure for poverty; on the contrary, it can all too easily aggravate the conditions out of which poverty grows. So they planned, among many other things, to expand education and to extend social services to all races. It is worth noting, in passing, that South Africa was the first, as it is still the only, country south of the Sahara to grant African natives some of the important benefits of social security such as old age pensions, children's allowances, and pensions for the blind.

The Planning Council has also devoted much thought to the grim social consequences of the ever-increasing process of urbanization which is entailed by the continued growth of secondary industries in an expanding economy. The Council has recognized and, indeed, emphasized that improvement in the life of the nonwhite races is not simply a question of abstract justice. It is a necessary and, in the long run, inescapable outcome of other economic and social changes which no one planned but

which can benefit everyone if they are properly guided at this juncture.

It is plain that an essential part of such a policy is the expansion of native education. And here again the Nationalist government finds itself in conflict with liberals and more particularly with Christian missions.

## EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

For more than a century native education has been almost entirely in the hands of the missionary branches of the leading Christian churches. It is they who built and staffed the first schools, who trained the native teachers, and who carried the financial burden for many years before the government offered them any subsidies. To this day nine out of every ten schools are managed by missionaries or their representatives. The government exercises a limited control by paying the salaries of approved teachers and by laying down certain regulations to which the curriculum must conform. The cost of the whole educational system is today borne in roughly equal shares by the missions, by the Africans themselves, and by the government, whose contributions have mounted steadily in the last fifteen years.

### *Results of Mission Education*

The outcome of this historical development is significant. South Africa now has a system of native education more solid as well as more extensive than that open to the indigenous people in any other part of the continent south of the Sahara. Not only is there a higher proportion of school-age children in school than is to be found elsewhere—the figure is around 30 per cent—but there has in recent years been a quite remarkable expansion in secondary school facilities and attendance.

The result is that South Africa has today a growing middle class of Africans, men and women who are not, and will never be, content to be mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. They are the products of sound teaching that has never sought to deny pupils access to any part of the world's heritage of cul-

ture. Taught through the medium of the English language from a reasonably early stage in their school life, they have been encouraged to improve their own understanding of nearly all those aspects of human knowledge that make for better living and a larger appreciation of what mankind has achieved and can yet achieve.

The missions have indeed striven to give their pupils the best that western civilization has to offer. As Victor Murray put it in his excellent book, *The School in the Bush*, the missionaries took the view of Africans that

for them, as for us, the treasures of the world's past have been heaped up. We received the treasures of Greece and Rome and Judea and have added to them. And if for us, barbarians and gentiles, Plato thought and Vergil sang and Jeremiah agonized and Christ died, these things happened for the African, too. For him also in later days Beethoven played, Leonardo painted, Shakespeare wrote, Pascal disputed and James Watt invented.

The effects produced in the social and political fields by such sound educational work have been visible for some years. But they have been watched with misgivings by those concerned to retard rather than to advance the rate of African progress. From time to time voices have been heard asking whether South Africa was really educating its African people "along the right lines," whether it was wise to prepare the minds of adolescents for a place in society which they were never destined to occupy, and whether education should not conform more closely to the realities of life in a caste society. In the past these criticisms have been fully answered, notably in the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Native Education which in 1936 investigated the whole question.

### *Nationalist Policy in Education*

But lately, since Dr. Malan's government took office, the challenge has been renewed more formidably than ever before. The Nationalists have said openly that public money should not be spent for such purposes as the production of a class of natives

who are discontented with things as they are, who have strange ideas of racial equality in their heads, and who quote from foreign documents about human rights. The political pressure became so strong that the government, which dares not close the schools, has now to face the grave problem of how to spend something like twelve million dollars every year on African education without producing really educated Africans!

To assist it in finding a solution to this problem, the government two years ago appointed a commission of inquiry that is still sitting. Of all the churches, only the Dutch Reformed Church is in effect represented on the commission although its own interest in native education is comparatively recent and its constructive efforts cannot in any sense compare with those exerted for generations by Methodists, Anglicans, and other religious groups. Incidentally, the other members of the commission, with one or two possible exceptions, are all known to be fellow-travellers of the present government.

Not only the personnel but also the terms of reference of the Commission reveal its purpose. It is directed to "formulate the



principles and aims of education for natives as an independent race." Other factors which the Commission must consider are the "inherent racial qualities" of Africans and the question "whether the education they receive is such as to prepare them for their future occupations."

The missionaries now await the Commission's report with anxiety. One of them with a strong sense of humor wonders whether the Commission will recommend the daily recital by all African school children of Charles Dickens' version of an ancient prayer:

Oh, let us love our occupations,  
Bless the master and his relations,  
Live upon our daily rations,  
And always know our proper stations.

The report will, almost certainly, revive the proposal to give native languages a larger place than they now have in the school syllabus and to impose much more in the way of handicrafts, like clay-modelling and weaving, on reluctant pupils and parents. Nor is it likely to be deterred from such "reforms" by



the unanimous opposition of African opinion as well as the informed protests of white liberals.

### *Pressure to Take Native Education from Missions*

The broad objects of the present inquiry are therefore plain enough to all realists. If they were not, they have been clarified further, and the ultimate outcome anticipated, by an influential section of the Dutch Reformed Church which is now ready to go so far as to ask the government to take all native education out of the hands of Christian missions. This request, staggering in all the circumstances, is nothing less than an endorsement of one of the aims explicitly stated in the original manifesto on *apartheid* issued by the Nationalists.

### *Segregation of Races in Education*

There is another serious reason why the influence of the Nationalists on educational policy is deeply suspect. They long ago succeeded in establishing the system of public schools on such lines that English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking children are now forced by law to go to separate schools. The hope is thereby defeated that even the two white races might in time come closer together. Parents today are not allowed to choose whether their children are to be educated through the medium of Afrikaans or English, and schools are discouraged where both media are employed.

Not content with this situation, the cultural wing of Afrikaner nationalism founded an institute in 1939 to promote "Christian-National" education of an almost fundamentalist character. Two years ago, after Dr. Malan's victory at the polls, this institute developed bolder tactics in its campaign to capture the curricula in state schools. The exponents of Christian-National education have left little doubt in the public mind about their program. They aim to curb freedom in the schools by subordinating such subjects as history, civics, geography, and even science to their own particular view of God and man. They seek to impose their Calvinist outlook not on church schools

of their own creation, but on the public schools financed entirely by the state. In pursuing this policy, they ignore the significant and increasing number of bilingual homes where both English and Afrikaans are spoken. They also disregard the fact that all Afrikaners are by no means Nationalists and that even among those who are, many do not adopt a narrow, bigoted attitude toward other races and religions. The government has not yet endorsed the program of Christian-National education, but a couple of leading cabinet ministers have done so and the pressure to make Dr. Malan accept it will certainly be maintained.

## ROLE OF THE COLORED PEOPLE

One of the complications of South African society is that it does not consist only of two and a half million white Europeans and eight million black Africans. Between these two major racial groups are one million "Colored" people, mainly in the Cape Province, and 300,000 Indians, mainly in the province of Natal. And the main target of the Nationalist government in its first two years in office has not been the Africans but the Colored folks and the Indians. One of Dr. Malan's first laws in 1948 deprived the Indians of the very meagre form of political representation in the Union Parliament that General Smuts had conceded them in 1946. But the worst sufferers from Nationalist attacks so far have been the Cape Colored people. Not only is their limited franchise threatened but their whole social status is being reduced.

### *Nationalist Attack on a Rising Racial Group*

The Colored people have in the past always been regarded as more akin in culture and outlook to the Europeans than to the Africans. Their very existence is of course traceable to the miscegenation practised by the early European colonists. As the original half-castes increased in numbers, they came to form a community of their own. From the first Cape constitution of 1854 until the Union was established in 1910, the political and legal rights of half-castes were substantially the same as

those of Europeans. Although these rights have been weakened since 1910, the Colored people none the less continued to rise economically and socially. It appears to be this very fact that has made the Nationalists concentrate so much of their fire and fury on the Colored community. Not only has a new law prohibited any future marriages between Europeans and Coloreds; the last session of parliament went further and made it a crime for men and women of the two communities to live together without the blessing of the church or the sanction of the law.

The cruel social consequences of these twin laws were predicted and they are now to be seen. Cases are regularly reported in which adult men and women who have lived together for many years and who have children of various ages, are haled before the courts and told that they will be imprisoned if they continue to live as husband and wife. These wretched men and women cannot now lawfully marry if they want to. The law demands that they shall break up their home, and it is indifferent to the fate of their children.

### *Will South Africa Remain a Caste Society?*

This crusade against any shade of color is pursued in the name of *apartheid* or segregation which requires every racial group to keep itself as much as possible apart from every other group. South Africa is in effect told that it must remain a caste society. But will it?

Until very late in the nineteenth century South Africa was a society based on agriculture. Its outlook on human rights was shaped, among other factors, by the earlier practice of slavery in the Cape Colony. Brown men and black knew their place. It was also defined for them by an inferiority emphasized by their lack of all the tools the white man used in daily life, including his language. The old rigid pattern of white masters and black servants began to change only near the end of the last century with the economic development that followed the discovery of diamonds and gold. The spread of education and of Christianity played its part. And before 1920, or thereabouts,

circumstances rarely occurred in which anyone would wish to depart from the accepted canons of interracial behavior. It is the changes wrought by the two world wars, and the growth of secondary industry in the years between them, that threaten to break the traditional pattern.

### *Emergence of a Middle Class*

Economic class had begun, however slowly, to take the place of racial caste, at least in urban life where all sorts of men come in close contact with one another. A new type of African emerged, the middle class man wearing collar and tie and not necessarily employed as anyone's servant or laborer. The numbers increased not only of the earlier types such as teachers and clergymen but of clerks, traders, journalists, and even doctors and lawyers. It is the appearance of such types of nonwhite men and—to a much smaller extent—of women that produces the challenge to the established etiquette of race relations. It is not necessary to meet servants on a footing of social equality or to eat together with laborers, but how can such courtesies be avoided when one encounters men like oneself? And even those who would not themselves contemplate such "unSouth African" forms of behavior, will be shaken by the news, if not the sight, of other white people doing things they would not do. It is very significant that recent speeches in Parliament, including those of a cabinet minister, have deplored the fact that, under the social conditions of contemporary urban life, South Africans are in danger of losing their color consciousness.

### *Resort to Law to Maintain Crumbling System*

This tendency seems to be the origin of the strong desire to enforce *apartheid* by such measures as those introduced by Dr. Malan's government. *Apartheid* is an attempt to maintain by the force of law an etiquette and, indeed, a whole system, that had begun to crumble under the pressure of other forces, economic and social. It must be remembered, too, that the established etiquette of race relations is more easily eroded in a society like South Africa where the dominant white group is not homo-

geneous in its cultural background, as it is in the southern parts of the United States. The existence of three distinct cultural traditions—Afrikaner, British, and Jewish—renders the etiquette less uniform and more fragile. Hence the resort to law to maintain it.

### *Curious Court Cases*

This use of law as the primary agency of social control is already presenting the courts with some curious cases. A white priest was recently convicted of the crime of marrying a woman, whom he honestly believed to be white, to a white man. Refusing to sustain the conviction, the Supreme Court pointed out that where a person's race was in doubt, his way of life was a better test to apply than his physical appearance. In another recent case a white man was convicted for using a public toilet reserved for nonwhites at a railroad station. His plea that he was in a hurry to catch a train was held to be no defense to the criminal charge.

### *Cost of Nationalist Policy*

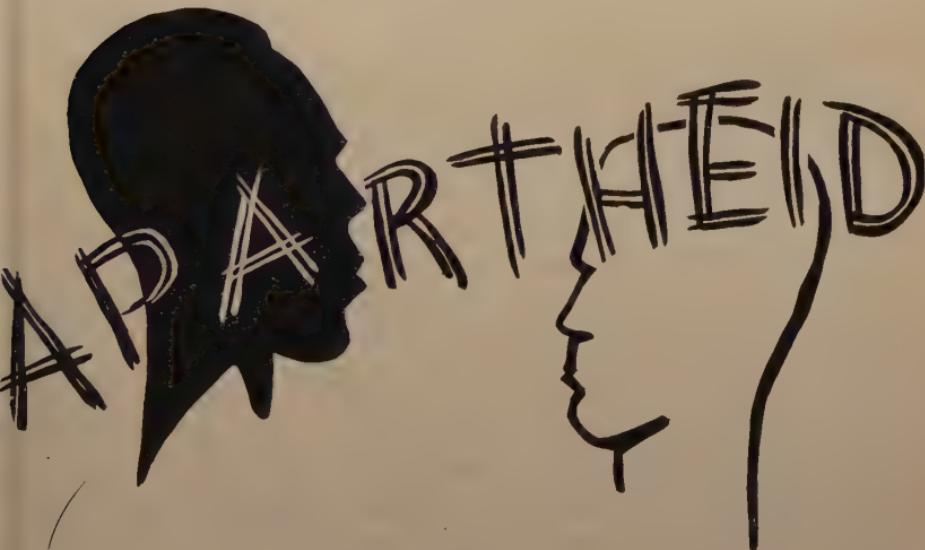
The advocates of *apartheid*, who bring the law into disrepute by such cases, do not pause to count the cost of such a policy. Yet for many years South Africa has paid a high price for its color prejudices in the form of low production of economic goods, since nonwhites are prohibited from doing skilled work. The color bar in industry has not, however, prevented employers from using more and more African labor in unskilled and even in semi-skilled operations. The law has merely retarded and hampered the inevitable process and thereby impoverished the country.

Similarly, attempts to sustain by law the social etiquette of racial domination will not in the long run prevent the recognition and acceptance by his fellow men of the black man's humanity and dignity. It may take time for the dominant white race to discover that there are some things in life that lie too deep for law, but the reassertion of that truth is among the certainties of the future.

## *Reaction to Death of Smuts*

It is impossible to predict what else the future holds in store for South Africa. The death of General Smuts has made less difference in the immediate political situation than might be imagined. The country has indeed lost its father-image, the grand old man who dominated its public life for the last thirty years. The United Party, which forms the parliamentary opposition to the Nationalist Government, has lost its leader, a man who evoked deeper and wider personal loyalty from his followers than anyone else has done even in a country notable for its political loyalties. But South Africans have long realized that one day the country would have to get along without General Smuts. The sense of loss was profound but it was perhaps tempered by the recognition that the end of one era also meant the opening of a new one.

General Smuts's personality and prestige made a profound impact on his closest colleagues and on most of his contemporaries. Sometimes, indeed, the far-sighted feared that this



impact went too deep in so far as those who felt its force seemed willing to leave all the responsibility of decision to him alone. However that may have been, the time has now clearly come for the political party that Smuts inspired to take up its own burdens. By the fact of its leader's death, the United Party comes of age. In place of devotion to one man's leadership, it must accept the more mature responsibility of framing, on the lines proposed by the Planning Council in its reports, an alternative policy to Dr. Malan's.

In that task the United Party will still have the advantage left by the legacy of Smuts's broad vision. If Smuts's successor, Mr. J. G. N. Strauss, displays a vigorous and constructive social purpose, he can draw upon a fund of goodwill and a variety of talent to assist him. If he is wise, he will rely on collective strength, not on individual inspiration. For it is perfectly plain that no man will again offer political leadership in Smuts's image. In the future principles must play the part in politics that personality has done in the past. That advance will not be easy to achieve in a country where personal loyalties have counted for so much. In striving to achieve it, Smuts's former followers will be doing their country as well as their party a signal service.

## INFLUENCE OF NATIONALIST POLICY IN AFRICA

Meanwhile, the influence of the Union, the oldest and strongest state in Africa, is being felt more and more beyond its own borders. If Africa is to have its own Mason and Dixon's line, it is not yet easily located on the map. One would expect it to be the Limpopo River, which is the northern boundary of the Union of South Africa.

### *South Rhodesia*

In the last twenty-five years, however, the color bar has crossed the Union's borders. Southern Rhodesia, the Union's closest neighbor, is a self-governing British colony with its own

parliament of white members. They legislate for a community of 100,000 white people as well as for 1,600,000 black Africans. In constitutional theory Britain can veto laws discriminating against the Africans but in practice she has never done so. Today Southern Rhodesia's native policy is not easily distinguishable from the Union's.

Africans are debarred in South Rhodesia from doing skilled work; they cannot buy or occupy land except in limited reservations; a small minority of their children receive an elementary school education and they go on to high school only if they are among the very fortunate few. About 400 Africans have reached the common voters' roll. They are regarded by everyone, from the Prime Minister down, as a "menace" to the 60,000 white voters and they are threatened with removal from it. For they are the last symbol in British Africa of the historic idea of equal citizenship for black and white in the same country. Under Sir Godfrey Huggins, who has been Prime Minister for many years, Southern Rhodesia cannot be suspected of liberalism, though he is not as hostile to native progress as the party which forms the parliamentary opposition. Sir Godfrey has managed to avoid the crudities which make South Africa's native policy an easy target for critics.

### *Copper Belt of Northern Rhodesia*

Southern Rhodesia's northern boundary is the great Zambezi river. This is the formidable natural barrier at which Jim Crow might have been expected to halt his Great Trek. Geography and economics alike suggest the wisdom of such a course. But in fact Jim Crow crossed it, too, more than twenty years ago and was then firmly established in the copper belt of the tropical British colony of Northern Rhodesia.

The conditions of labor in the rich copper mines are prescribed by the all-white miners' union, most of whose members are drawn from South Africa or Southern Rhodesia. They are strong enough to keep skilled work exclusively in their own hands at an average wage of \$200 a month. The Africans do

all the "dirty," unskilled work at an average wage of \$10 a month. This color bar in the copper belt was never even mentioned in British reports until it was exposed ten years ago in a pamphlet by the present writer. Investigation showed that this industrial barrier was foremost among the grievances that led to the strike and disturbances among African workers in 1940. Suggestions for the gradual but steady relaxation of the color bar were then frowned upon for fear they would disturb the war-time production of copper. They were, however, endorsed in 1948 by the report of a commission from Britain which conducted a full inquiry into the question.

This belated report has, however, not been implemented because in the intervening years white control of Northern Rhodesia has tightened. The white population has increased, being now 30,000 amid 1,700,000 Africans. It is true that in 1948 two Africans took their seats for the first time in the Legislative Council, but as in other British East African colonies, one constitutional step forward by Africans was accompanied by two steps forward taken by the white oligarchy. Consequently, the balance of political power does not shift in favor of Africans. On the contrary, throughout Central and Eastern Africa, Britain's war-time preoccupation and post-war weakness has enabled the small European communities to strengthen their position in relation to the millions of Africans whom they dominate.

### *Scheme of Whites for United Rhodesia*

The white people of Southern and Northern Rhodesia have long cherished a scheme to amalgamate the two territories and then to demand virtual self-government from Britain. But several obstacles remain in the way of this ambition. One is the opposition of African opinion which has grown more articulate than it was eleven years ago when a Royal Commission reported unfavorably on the plan. Another is the difference between the native policies of the two Rhodesias, although these are more apparent than real. No black man has ever sat in the Southern parliament but some four hundred Africans there can still vote

for white candidates. In the Northern legislative chamber the two selected black men now sit alongside 21 whites, but all black men are debarred from the franchise on a technicality. Otherwise, white supremacy is entrenched in Southern Rhodesia as deeply as it is in the Union of South Africa, whereas in Northern Rhodesia it is firm only in the copper mines (which are, incidentally, financed by American as well as British capital). In the rest of the Northern colony the familiar British technique of "indirect rule" has obscured the future status of the Africans. Ominously, the earlier doctrine that "African interests should be paramount" was formally abandoned by the British Colonial Office in 1948.

### *The Real Aims of the Federation*

A stream of immigrants and capital from Britain has flowed into the Rhodesias in recent years, combining with older local sentiment to push forward the project of one united Rhodesia as a new British dominion in central Africa. An unofficial conference held in 1949 enthusiastically supported the newer plan of federation in place of the older project of total amalgamation. An adjacent third colony, Nyasaland, may also be involved.

Constitutional complexities disguise the true nature of this movement. The real aim of federation is a substantial measure of political power for whites only. It will be reached in the next few years if, as seems likely, the white men on the spot prove too strong to be restrained by such compunction as a limited group of Fabian socialists and informed liberals display in London. After federation has taken place, the Mason and Dixon's line will be easier to draw on the map of British Africa. Since it is already clearly visible in East Africa, it will coincide roughly with the equator.

British West Africa, thanks to a bad climate and fierce tropical diseases, has remained free from small white communities with their inevitable doctrines of white supremacy. Genuine progress towards self-government has been steadily made by Africans there. With a career open to talent, a wealthy middle class has

emerged, confident and ready to undertake the responsibilities of public office. In the Gold Coast, if not in Nigeria also, the withdrawal of the British administration is only a matter of time. West Africa accordingly presents a sharp contrast to South and East Africa where racial domination remains vigorous and unashamed. In these circumstances the important question to be asked is how long this unreconstructed continent of Africa can remain half-slave and half-free.

### *Moral Pressure of World Opinion*

How soon that question will be answered depends not only on white South Africans and their policies; it depends also on the moral pressure undoubtedly exerted today on every country by world opinion. In the shaping of that opinion no nation plays a bigger part than the United States. That is why all Americans have now become, in a full sense, their brother's keeper. In that capacity they face in the Soviet Union a rival whose strength, at least in this field of racial freedom, it would be an error to underrate.

Africans, like Asians, are impressed with the consistent attitude to race and racial discrimination displayed by the Russians. They contrast it in their own minds not only with its opposite as displayed in Southern Africa but also with the weakness and hesitation shown by the colonial powers in Africa and notably by Britain. Such episodes as the reaction to the recent marriage of an African chieftain, Seretse Khama, to a white woman seem highly significant to millions of simple minds. So whenever Americans are tempted by the demands of "the cold war" to support the colonial powers and to ignore or even to defend what happens in Africa, let them remember that it is their own cause that will suffer in the end no less than the cause of racial freedom and human enlightenment in the dark continent.

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# *Letter from the Editor*

## SOCIAL ACTION'S PLANS FOR 1951

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The beginning of a new year is always a time for re-examination of one's loyalties and plans—whether for a magazine or for personal life. This is a letter to you about the policies of *Social Action* for 1951.

We began publishing last September a series called "Decisions Christians Face in the World Crisis." This series came into being because of the portentous nature of the Korean War. It began with a ringing affirmation of basic religious principles of Protestantism for the present world situation.

The next issue went to the heart of the deadlocks and conflicts of policy in the American government. It reminded Protestant social actionists that the most powerful and crucial organization for them to work with was the political party. (In Connecticut, an organization called the "Small Town Democrats" is using this issue for recruiting people to work in the major parties.)

In November we published perhaps the most crucial issue in the series—offering in summary fashion a pattern of leadership for America in a revolutionary world.

This month, *Social Action* highlights a forgotten spot in the world — South Africa — where a racial crisis points up tragically one of the major themes of this series: America cannot by verbal propaganda or by military power alone stem the spread of communism. We must demonstrate (by more than the peanut-sized Point Four program)

that we intend to use our power to help the impoverished people of the world secure economic justice and political freedom.

January *Social Action* on "War and Public Opinion" will describe the strategy by which various "respectable" power groups are manipulating the popular press in the present international crisis and playing upon certain human weaknesses. The issue provides a religious basis for judging this strategy and indicates the positive aspects of the American character which must be appealed to and strengthened in the world crisis.

February's *Social Action* will reveal the ideology and strategy of powerful right-wing groups in America using religion and fear of communism for promoting reaction. This will be a controversial but important issue, for it will indicate the nature of America's new isolationism.

In March, Kenneth Boulding, one of the few economists in America who is in the top rank of his profession and who has a profound knowledge of Christianity, will give a basis for evaluating government, labor and business policy on prices and taxes.

The entire April issue will be devoted to one of the most neglected but vital areas of American policy—land ownership and tenure at home and abroad. Missionary, business and government practices which thwart the drive of the rural poor for a just share of the product of

their labor will come under sharp attack.

In May, *Social Action* will do a careful and critical study of a Roman Catholic plan for a new social order in America—the Industry Council Plan. The power of the Catholic Church in the world is recognized, but what are the economic and political ends toward which it works in American society?

We expect the June issue to be the climax of the series for Protestant church people. It will block out the specific implications of the series for the program of the Protestant churches in the coming months.

This series seeks to carry out what have been through the years the three primary objectives of *Social Action*:

1. To deal thoroughly, honestly and clearly with the most pressing social issues in our society, to expose injustice and tyranny and to propose ways that justice and freedom can belong to all men;
2. To report and to evaluate specific experiments in Christian social action that the word may become flesh;
3. To publish crusading issues that will call men's minds and hearts to the needs of people forgotten or neglected by other publications.

These objectives have provided the magazine with one of the most difficult editorial policies of any American publication, and they have, as you and we are well aware, not always been realized. Men combining authoritative knowledge of important social areas and of religion and also able to write well are hard to find. We covet your aid. Send us letters as to the areas with

which you wish us to deal and names of possible writers. Send us leads of worthwhile projects in social action. Tell us when the articles have appeared valuable to you and when the authors have been more pontifical than clear. We wish *Social Action* to be lucid in its reasoning without committing the simplicism of *Readers Digest*; we wish it to speak prophetically to Christians without taking on the dogmatism of *Time*.

We believe that the current series of *Social Action* deals with major centers of power and crucial issues in the world crisis. We believe you have in the series a social and religious framework for understanding tomorrow's headlines on labor-management negotiations, superpower international strategy, political party activity, Catholic social pronouncements, right-wing pressure.

*Social Action* is a magazine not to be flipped through but to be studied and re-read. This series is being used as a study guide by many church and educational organizations. Readers are having the series sent to program leaders of various discussion and policy making groups. Parents are sending it as a gift to children in college needing a religious and social perspective on current events. Churches are sending it to young men training as ministers in seminary. You can still secure copies of the entire series by filling out the blank on the next page.

We did not set out to end this letter on a promotional note. The chief thing we wish to express is our appreciation for the high comradeship among *Social Action* readers and to tell you of our enthusiasm over future publishing plans.

—KENNETH UNDERWOOD

# Good Reading

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To: THE COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL ACTION  
289 Fourth Avenue  
New York 10, N. Y.

- I enclose \$2.00 for 14 issues of SOCIAL ACTION, beginning with September, 1950, the first issue in the present series.
- I enclose \$1.50 for a year's subscription to SOCIAL ACTION, beginning with the current issue.

Name .....

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## *On To Action*

First reaction to this race relations issue on the situation in South Africa is likely to be frustration. What can we do at this distance? Our government's policy is not directly involved. Our church missions are presumably doing what they can. We feel like those acquaintances of Jesus at his crucifixion who "stood afar off, seeing these things."

Race is one problem upon which much can be done at our very doors. It is one of the most plastic problems in American society. Formerly "lily white" schools are opening to Negroes. The armed forces have been instructed to remove racial segregation. Eight states have laws forbidding racial discrimination in employment. More and more white churches are accepting Negro members, and a few are now genuinely interracial. Something can be done about race, here and now, which will support the actions of the United States for human rights in the United Nations and the actions of the Protestant Churches for racial justice through the World Council of Churches.

At the outset, we Christians can state our goals clearly and unequivocally. We applaud the recent statement of the Alabama Synod of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., which proclaimed "the removal of legal segregation" as its goal and refused to temper its words "to achieve a unanimity of opinion." The members of the Christian Relations Committee of the Synod adopted "the attitude of George Washington toward the embryonic Constitution . . . 'If to please the people we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterward defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair. The event is in the hand of God.'"

For each local church to work toward such goals, a determined group of Christians must be organized, fully aware, as the writers of the Alabama Synod report, that the forces of opposition to social justice and civil rights "fight over every acre of ground, yielding only an inch at a time."

Let us not be among those who "stood afar off, seeing these things" but among those who "raise a standard to which the wise and honest can repair."

